

Women's Day for all of us [CA-NS] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

International Women's Day has great potential. It could be for women what Martin Luther King Jr. Day is for African Americans - a powerful memorial and an incentive to political action. But the day is a non-event for most Canadian women. The calendar hanging on my office wall doesn't even note it on March 8.

Much of the quarrelling centres on a tired, but somehow never outworn, controversy: Is it in the best interest of women and their children for a mother to work for wages? In 2004, we need to move past treating this as a moral issue and address the economic circumstances that have eliminated real lifestyle choices for many Canadian families. This International Women's Day, I recommend that women on both sides of the wage-earning divide read *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle-Class Mothers & Wives are Being Pushed to the Limit* by a mother-daughter team (Elizabeth Warren, a Harvard law professor, and Amelia Warren Tyagi, a business consultant). *The Two-Income Trap* demonstrates that feminism has not yet outlived its purpose in North America. Given the bleak economic situation the book documents, now, more than ever, women desperately need to stand up together against the political and economic forces that threaten the stability of all of our families.

Since the authors are American, I was worried *The Two-Income Trap* might be an ultra-conservative missile aimed at selfish, materialistic "career women." Thankfully, though, the book concentrates on restoring a proper sense of economic perspective. It does not push a stay-at-home agenda or add to working mothers' guilt. Instead, it conducts an in-depth economic analysis explaining why so many families have two working parents and yet perch on the brink of financial disaster. It describes a conundrum many Canadian women recognize: We can't afford not to work, but, given the costs of child care and commuting, we can only barely afford to work.

As Warren and Tyagi suggest, we need to speak up - in numbers - to the people who structure taxes, set mortgage rates, regulate child care and develop neighbourhoods. If International Women's Day is ever to develop a real profile on the Canadian calendar, we need to re-establish that women's issues are, first and foremost, economic issues, a set of common pressures that we all face. International Women's Day is not for members of a fringe interest group, but for all of us - we average Jills and Janes who hold Canadian society together. It's high time for us all to claim the day as our own and really make it count.

- reprinted from The Chronicle-Herald

Region: Canada ^[2]

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